

Gram method using dilute carbol fuchsin as a counter stain.

From the constancy of positive results in carcinoma of the stomach and of negative findings in other conditions it would seem that this simple laboratory procedure should be used as a routine in the examination of all suspicious gastric conditions.

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#### COMMENTS ON TROPICAL MEDICINE.

By CREIGHTON WELLMAN, Oakland.

##### *Zoology and Medicine.*

Medical Zoology is rapidly coming to its own. Since the recognition of specific causes of disease bacteriology was the first to ally itself with clinical medicine and for a time threatened to divide the field with the pathologist. But there has been and still is an increasingly significant tendency to admit and study the effects of animal organisms in disease with the same thoroughness with which bacterial affections are observed. A considerable part of this is to be credited to students of tropical medicine. Portions of protozoology, formerly regarded as an academical science, helminthology, long looked upon as a distinct and isolated branch of natural history, and entomology, which was for centuries tolerated as a hobby of dilettantes, have gradually become coordinated into a logical science which touches and explains a goodly fraction of the important diseases of mankind. This study should be taught systematically and thoroughly in every medical school in the country instead of being touched upon in a desultory manner by the bacteriologist, pathologist or clinician.

##### *Leprosy in California.*

During several months' study of a small group of lepers at the Alameda County Infirmary the writer has become much interested concerning the presence among us of this (to the pathologist) most fascinating of all diseases with the possible exception of syphilis. The invasion by the germ of all the tissues except the muscles, coupled with the comparative immunity of the vital organs, produces a remarkable disease picture. This was strikingly ex-

emplified in an advanced case which came to autopsy last week. We have recently seen a leper on the streets of Oakland and Dr. Thomas J. Clark reports having noticed two or three more. Dr. Martin H. Fischer has called our attention to a case occurring at Livermore in a white man who had never been abroad. We should be glad to get further reports of the existence of the disease in the State.

##### *Our Small Rodents.*

The carrying by rats and mice of other diseases besides bubonic plague, to say nothing of the enormous economic loss occasioned by their destructive habits, constitutes a perfectly sufficient reason for all the effort and expense incurred in the extermination of these pests. In addition to harboring several kinds of entozoa which may affect man (*Trichinella*, *Hymenolepis*, *Taenia*, etc.,) it is now claimed by Barabaschi (*Gaz. d. Osp. e d. Clin.*, 1909, p. 1417 f.) that various pathogenic bacteria such as pneumococcus, bacillus of anthrax, streptococci, etc., are disseminated by these animals (mice). A recent monograph on the rat gives a long and impressive list of the economic, hygienic and other sins of that mammal. Medically speaking, in addition to hydrophobia we have a special and sometimes fatal disease due to rat-bite described from Japan (*Mittel. a. d. Grenzgeb. d. Med. u. Chir.*, 1900, p. 231 f.) If space permitted some disconcerting things might also be said regarding the protozoan and arthropod guests of domestic rodents, but enough has been predicated to show our sympathy with the aims of the Society for the Destruction of Vermin.

##### *Hookworm Among Us.*

The first conference on the eradication of hookworm will meet in Atlanta, Georgia, this month. Several cases of this disease have been reported from this State to the writer, and through the kindness of Dr. W. A. Clark, Superintendent of the Alameda County Infirmary, we have had opportunity of keeping an instance of severe infection under careful observation recently. One of the endemic centers of the disease seems to be the Sandwich Islands, and former residents of that territory are constantly introducing the worm into California. We hope that further reports of cases will be sent in. It is especially important to have information from rural districts and small towns.

##### *A Suggestion.*

Some of the physicians have been good enough to take a part in this department and have kindly reported their observations and cases of tropical disease. It is hoped that this activity may grow and widen and that the medical men, not alone of the bay cities but of the entire State, may take up the

matter of focusing the interest regarding tropical medicine in these columns. We should especially like to hear more from the southern part of the State. May we suggest that every physician who meets with an instructive case communicate with us? There is no doubt but that every reader of the JOURNAL who is interested in scientific medicine will greatly appreciate such information.

### DERMATITIS FACTITIA IN A PATIENT WITH PRURITUS GENERALIS—A CASE REPORT.

By HARRY E. ALDERSON, M. D., San Francisco.

This condition is uncommon enough to warrant the reporting of cases, and the following is an account of one recently seen in the practice of the writer, presenting some peculiar features.

Mrs. X. Age 62+. Widow. Vocation: At present she devotes all her time to the relief of her symptoms. She formerly conducted a fake medical institute. She is poorly nourished, very nervous and a pronounced hypochondriac. She has had pruritus generalis, formication being a marked feature, for four years. She states that the excitement during the great fire in San Francisco and the trying times following were responsible for its onset. She cherishes the interesting theory that her "system is full of a gritty substance which is gradually working its way through the skin where it causes intolerable crawling sensations, etc." To "capture" these grains, she gouges out a piece of epidermis at the proper psychological moment and is rewarded by instant relief, whereupon she awaits with poised thumb, the appearance of this sensation elsewhere and then promptly scoops out more epidermis. This performance occurs daily. The superficial lacerations that she thus induces are of about the width of her thumb nail and from one-half to one-inch or more long. They are usually straight in their direction; but often form slight curves. She always immediately cleanses the wound and so it soon crusts over and heals. A white, faintly marked, permanent scar, surrounded by a narrow zone of dark pigmentation, results. This pigmentation is an interesting feature and is probably due to the fact that the pigment cells are naturally in a state of increased activity at her age (62+), and also that they are often very active in itching dermatoses where there is much rubbing or scratching. Her body is covered with these scars, so that hardly any space is left for new lesions.

She is improving very much under suggestive treatment and the following medication: Strontium bromide (gr. 10) every four hours, and tincture rhei every three or four days; also a lotion composed of liquor carbonis detergens, zinc oxide, calamine, liquor calcis, and oleum amygdal. dulc. She is gradually learning to rub this on in place of the destructive scoop with her thumb nail.

This patient presents a condition allied to acarophobia, the usual accompaniment of pruritus senilis. Instead of imagining that the sensations are due to parasites, however, she blames "migratory grains of sand" for her trouble. The universality of the symptoms and the fact that they occur the same throughout the year, are rather unusual features. The patient's skin is fine and delicate, but rather dry. Very little evidence of senile degeneration, aside from thinness and dryness, is apparent, and so one usually finds the skin to be in pruritus senilis.

The foregoing record well illustrates the impor-

tance of avoiding haste in making a diagnosis. Without carefully examining and investigating this case, one could easily go astray in naming the disease. The peculiar white scars, with surrounding zones of pigmentation, might be very misleading in the absence of any history or general observation of the patient.

## SOCIETY REPORTS

### SONOMA COUNTY.

Regular meeting, Petaluma, Jan. 7, 1910.

1. Address, President S. Z. Peoples, "The Plans and Aspirations of Our Society for 1910."

After briefly reviewing the history and work of the Society, he expressed himself briefly as follows:

That if our Society accomplished nothing more than getting its members better acquainted, it would serve a useful purpose. That we expect and hope to have at each meeting in the current year some live practical subject for consideration and clinical material whenever possible and that the entire membership shall freely enter into the discussion. That our county fee bill should be supported at least as to a minimum charge, and that our bills when presented bear not less than this minimum charge. That every eligible physician in the county should be induced to join the Society.

"I wish to advocate here what has been suggested before but never put into action, the organization of the physicians of each community into a local society." Their sphere of action to be, to fix distance fees to certain well known landmarks, deal with questions arising with the local pharmacists, matters of sanitation, public health, etc. "I wish to remind you right here, of our duty in reporting contagious diseases and births to the proper authorities. We should not allow ourselves to be reminded of these duties by arrests made for neglecting them. Let us endeavor to eliminate 'deadbeats' as much as possible from our service, compiling a 'blacklist' if necessary."

That we consider the attitude of local pharmacists toward the profession, and possibly meet with them for the consideration of matters of mutual interest and probably send a circular letter to all the druggists of the county defining our attitude in our relations with them.

"Let us devote more attention to the commercial end of our business."

"Stand together for mutual protection and advancement of the profession and keep in mind that a kind act or a kind word for a brother practitioner will profit you more than unfair criticism and disparagement of another."

2. Paper—Dr. Marion B. McAulay. Appendicitis. After briefly referring to the attention this subject has and is receiving in all fields of medical work and literature and briefly relating its historical significance, the doctor presented the following points notably among others:

Above all things success in handling and curing appendicitis at the present time lies in making "a quick and accurate diagnosis, for without relation to present signs and symptoms a case may result in rupture within one hour." Refers briefly to the anatomical position and relations of the appendix and the difference in opinion among well known surgeons and anatomists, giving as her personal

(Patient exhibited before the University of California Medical Alumni Association.)